

58-9

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VOL. 58. No. 9.—APRIL, 1923.

TEXT OF THE CHARTER OF THE ACADEMIE ROYALE
DE BELGIQUE, TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL
IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE ACADEMIE AT
BRUSSELS.

BY A. E. KENNELLY.

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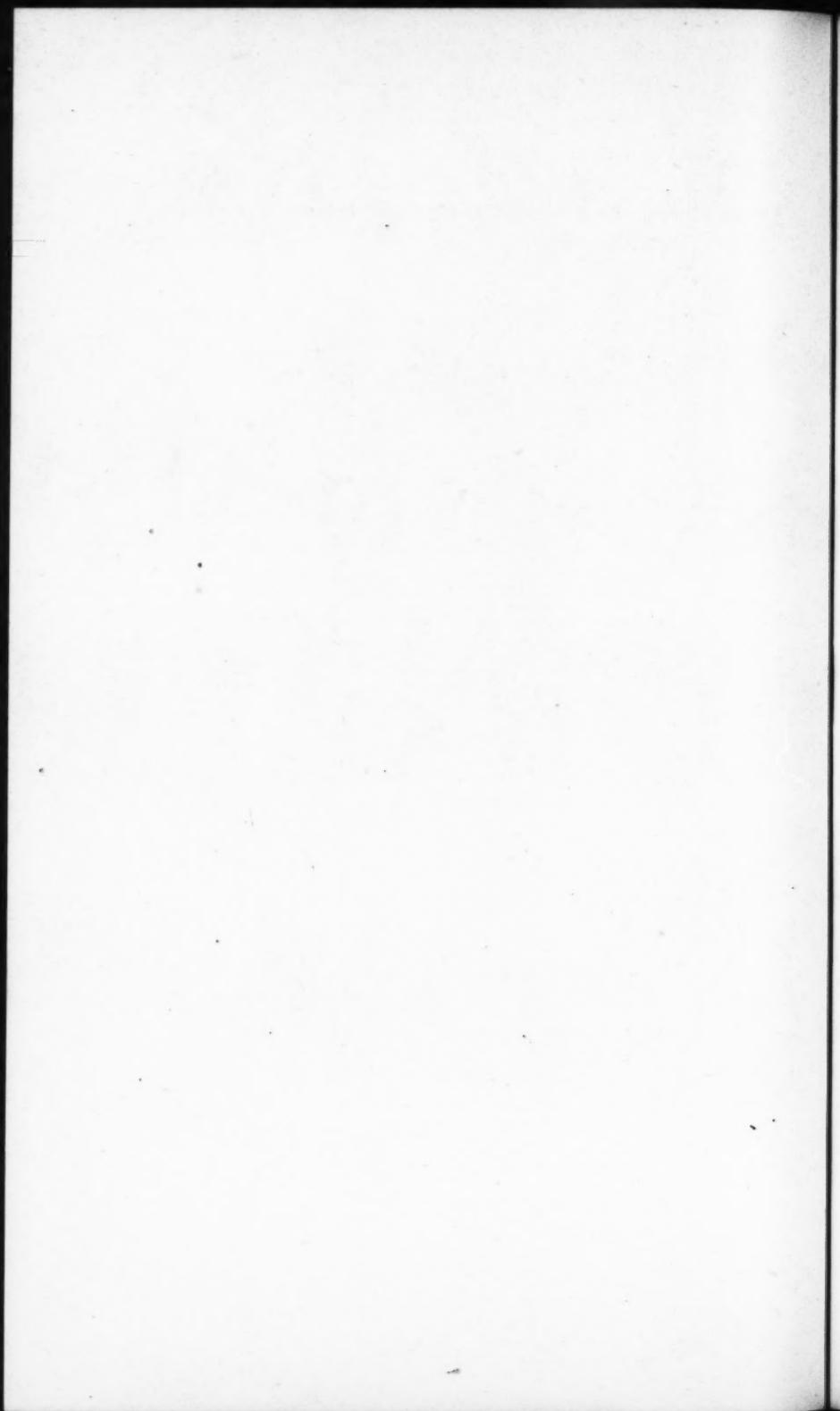


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As one of the delegates of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to the celebration in Brussels, on May 23-24, 1922, of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Academie Royale de Belgique, the writer had the opportunity of seeing the charter displayed on that occasion, under a glass case, in the Belgian Academy Building. This royal charter, with its appended great red wax seal 14 cm. in diameter, is a remarkable document in many ways, and possesses a wonderful history. It is written in beautiful French script. It is perhaps the only charter granted to a learned society, which conveys to the members of the same the rights of nobility, by virtue of their election. This prerogative seems to have been enjoyed by the academicians of Brussels until shortly after the French revolution.

By the kindness of the courteous Academy Secretary, the writer was permitted to examine the charter in detail and to make a copy of its main text, a translation of which is here offered. It will be remembered that the empress Maria Theresa, who bestowed this charter, was one of the most remarkable royal personages of the eighteenth century. One of her daughters, the ill-fated Marie Antoinette, a princess seventeen years old at the Court of Vienna when this charter was signed, became Queen of France and perished under the guillotine during the Reign of Terror, on what is now the Place de la Concorde at Paris.

MARIA THERESA, by the Grace of God, Dowager Empress of the Romans, Queen of Hungary, of Bohemia, of Dalmatia, of Croatia, of Esclavonia, etc., Archduchess of Austria, Duchess of Burgundy, of Lothier, of Brabant, of Limburg, of Luxemburg, of Guelders, of Milan, of Styria, of Carinthia, of Carniola, of Mantua, of Parma and Plaisance, of Guastalle, of Wirtemburg, of High and Low Silesia, etc.,

Sovereign Princess of Transylvania, Princess of Suabia, Marquise of the Holy Roman Empire, of Burgovia, of Moravia, of High and Low Lusacia, Countess of Hapsburg, of Flanders, of Artois, of Tyrol, of Hainault, of Namur, of Ferrete, of Kyburg, of Goricia, and of Gradisca, Landgrave of Alsace, Lady of the Marches of Esclavonia, of Port Naon, of Salins and of Malines, Duchess of Lorraine and of Bar, Grand Duchess of Tuscany. To all to whom these presents shall come, GREETING. Our attention having been called to the present condition of the Literary Society, which, according to our good will, was established, in 1769, in Our city of Bruxelle, it has been represented to Us that, for the better fulfilment of the purpose of this society, it would be advantageous to give it stable and legal form; and since We ever adopt with pleasure all that tends to stimulate, foster and expand the taste for, and the study of, useful sciences and of good literature; so We have founded and instituted, as by these Presents We do here found and institute the said Society as a permanent body, under the title of THE IMPERIAL AND ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND LETTERS, assigning to it, for its meetings, the hall of Our Royal Library, which we have recently adapted and opened for public use. It is Our wish that the members of this Academy rigorously conform to the appended Rules, attached under Our seal to these presents, such as we have decided on, for determining more particularly the objects, Order and form of their assemblies, conferences and exercises. We grant, by virtue of the confidence we place in the wisdom and in the spirit of the members of this Academy, that they shall have the right to print, without applying for the approval of the Book Censors, all the writings and literary productions which they themselves compose; likewise the Memoirs, which after having contested for the annual premiums shall be judged worthy of publication; provided that these writings, productions and Memoirs shall have been examined and approved by the Academy. We grant that the said Academy may select, for the printing of its various works, a printing office to which we will transmit the necessary privileges; We assign to this Academy the right to use in all its proper affairs, a special seal, consisting of the Arms of Burgundy with the legend — Sigillum Caesareae Regiae Scientiarum et Litterarum Academiae — of which the permanent Secretary shall have charge. Finally, to give an enduring token of the special esteem in which We hold useful abilities, and those who know how to apply them successfully, We ordain that the title of Academician shall convey to all those who shall become endowed with it, and who have not already been raised to the nobility, or are not already nobles by birth,— the

distinctions and prerogatives attaching to the rank of nobility in person, and this by virtue of the act of their admission into this Company. It is Our wish that the Registration of these Presents, so far as occasion demands, shall be made free of charge, where and whenever may be pertinent. We charge his Royal Highness the Duke Charles Alexander of Lorraine and of Bar, our trusty and well beloved Brother-in-Law and Cousin, Administrator of the Grand Mastery in Prussia, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in Germany and Italy, Our Lieutenant Governor and Captain General of the Low Countries and We likewise command all Our Councillors, Justices, Officers and Subjects hereby involved or affected, as also the Kings and Heralds of Arms in Our Belgian Provinces, that they shall cause, and fully and freely permit Our said Academy of Sciences and Letters, as well as all the members of the same, to secure and enjoy all the Privileges, Prerogatives and Distinctions which it has pleased Us to attach thereto, and to the full extent of these Presents, in cessation of all let or hindrance to the contrary; FOR SO IT PLEASETH US. In testimony whereof We have signed and We have attached hereto Our Great Seal.

Handed down at Vienna, the 16th. December of the year of Grace, one thousand seven hundred and seventy two, and of Our reign the Thirty Third.

K. R. V^{ds}

(signed) MARIA THERESE.

By the Dowager Empress and Queen
(signed) A. Go. LEDERER

Letters Patent of the Founding of the
Imperial And Royal Academy of
Sciences and Letters at Bruxelles.



